

**PPS RECORDS FOR
90 OAK STREET
(previously 38 Oak Street)
PLAT 35, LOT 168**

**SAMUEL K. FISKE HOUSE
Built 1857-1859**

DESCRIPTION:

A 2-1/2 story, late Greek Revival/Italianate style single-family house with a flank gable roof, featuring bracketed eaves and a full shed dormer extending the entire width of the building. The house has wood clapboard siding and wooden one-over-one and two-over one wooden double hung sash. An ell addition was constructed on the east side, well set back from the street, and now incorporates the house's entrance (originally, probably on the east elevation). The house stands on a lot raised several feet above the street.

The house stands on a 7,677 square foot lot on the south side of Oak Street, three lots east of Messer Street. (The other two streets bounding the block are Sycamore on the east and Willow on the south.) The lot measures approximately 50 feet wide on Oak Street, and approximately 153 feet deep.

Note: Oak Street addresses were renumbered in 1910. The original street address of this property was 38 Oak Street.

HISTORY:

Samuel K. Fiske was a jeweler living on Cranston Street when in late May 1857 he purchased a vacant lot of land on the south side of Oak Street from Oliver Waterman of Providence. (Note: records sometimes spell Fiske's last name as "Fisk," but since it is spelled "Fiske" on the original deed, that is the spelling chosen here.) The house was built between 1857 and 1859, when Fiske appears in the city directory as living on Oak Street; soon after that, the house acquired the address of 38 Oak Street. Fiske lived there for the next 60 years, building the addition at the east side of the house in 1903. In 1908 the house was sold to John and Emma Taylor; in 1910 its address changed to 90 Oak Street. Mrs. Taylor outlived her husband and remained in the house until the 1930s. Since then the house has changed hands six times, most recently in 2000 when it was purchased by Amy Leidtke and Karen Holler.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT¹:

After the founding of Providence in 1636, the area west of the Providence River was initially used for common grazing land. Isolated farmsteads began to appear on the "West Side" in the 18th century, after several highways were built leading to the hinterlands of the Providence Plantations and to distant towns in other British colonies. The Plainfield Road (portions of which were later called High Street, and now Westminster Street), was laid out in 1711, extending from the Providence River many miles westward into Connecticut; the Moshanticut Road, now Cranston Street, was built by 1717. By the time of the Revolutionary War, more than 1,600 people lived on the West Side. Both Parade and Messer Streets were laid out by the end of the 18th century.

In 1798, the area now bounded by Parade, Willow, Messer and Westminster Streets was a 20-acre farm belonging to Nathan and Rufus Waterman. (The Watermans also owned extensive property on College Hill; Waterman Street is named after them.) The Watermans' farm on the West Side, known as Christian Hill, was first platted for residential development in 1830: Oak and Willow Streets are shown on that plat

¹ From "The West Side, Providence," RI Historical Preservation Commission Survey Report, 1976; PPS Records for 33 Oak Street; and plat maps.

map. The plat was redrawn in 1848 and again in 1871, at which time the lot on which 90 Oak now stands achieved its current size of 7,677 square feet.

By the middle of the 19th century, Providence was growing increasingly industrialized and urbanized. The introduction of public transportation (horse-drawn streetcars) along Westminster and Cranston Streets in the 1860s facilitated development on the West Side at a much faster pace. By 1900 the area surrounding the Dexter Parade Ground had become a densely built upper and middle-class suburban neighborhood. Today known variously as the Armory District or the West Broadway neighborhood, its population is more economically and culturally diverse, but the 19th century housing stock remains largely intact.

DESIGNATIONS

90 Oak Street is a contributing building to the Broadway-Armory Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (In the inventory, the house is dated ca. 1860, and not named.)

The house stands just outside the boundaries of the Armory District local historic district zone, designated by the City of Providence.

RECORDS (*All Records were found in Providence City Hall unless otherwise noted*).

Maps and Atlases (Archives, Registry of Deeds)

1798: "A Map of Owners of Lots in Providence," compiled by Henry B. Chace in 1912: Plate 13. This map shows more than 50 acres of land bounded by the Plainfield Road (now Westminster Street) on the north, the Cranston Road (now Cranston Street) on the south, a "new highway" on the west (now Messer Street), and Dexter Lane (now Parade Street) on the east. This land is divided among three owners, with the northernmost 20 acres owned by Nathan and Rufus Waterman. Oak Street would later be laid out within the Waterman parcel.

1830: "Plat of Lots on Christian Hill in the City of Providence owned by Heirs of Nathan and Rufus Waterman, deceased," surveyed December 18, 1830 by S.B. Cushing Co. and recorded February 22, 1822 in Plat Book 1, Page 6 (copied on card 2). The map shows High (Westminster), Oak and Willow Streets laid out between Parade and Messer Streets. Lot #52 is on the south side of Oak Street, two lots east of Messer; it measures 50 feet by 152 feet. This is where 90 Oak Street now stands.

1848: "Plat of the Division of the Richard Waterman of Coventry estates, made by order of the commissioners appointed by the Court of Probate (Coventry) on January 8, 1848, by Atwater Schubarth & Haines (surveyed and platted December 18, 1830 by S.B. Cushing), recorded August 4, 1848 in Plat Book 3, Page 77 (copied on card 97). Also, "Plat of House Lots on Christian Hill belonging to heirs of Rufus and Nathan Waterman," surveyed and platted October 9, 1848 by Atwater, Schubarth & Haines (copied by J.A. Latham May 1895), recorded in Plat Book 23, Page 11 (copied on card 699). Both of these maps replicate the original 1830 plat, although both show today's Oak Street named Willow Street, and today's Willow named Oak. Lot #52 is shown on the south side of "Willow," two lots east of Messer, measuring 50 by 152 feet.; on the "Richard Waterman" map, Lot #52 has the name "Dyer" written on it. This would refer to Martha E. Dyer (see tax records, below.)

1871: "Plat of Lots belonging to Rufus Waterman, being a portion of the Nathan and Rufus Waterman Plat, replatted by C.E. Paine in July 1871 (recorded in Plat Book 1, Page 5, copied on card 180). This map shows the original 1830 plat extended southward to Hudson Street, but only 22 numbered lots are shown within this 6-block area. The lot on the south side of Oak Street, two lots east of Messer, is numbered 15, and measures 50.15 by 153.09 feet (7,677 square feet).

1875: "Atlas of the City of Providence," by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 2 (Ward 8), Plate L shows the block bounded by Oak, Sycamore, Willow and Messer Streets. On the south side of Oak Street, two lots east of Messer Street, stands a house numbered 38 Oak Street, on a lot measuring 7,677 square feet. (The large lot abutting this one on the west, at the corner of Messer Street, would later be subdivided into 2 lots

fronting on Oak and two fronting on Messer.) No property owner's name is indicated on this map. The house has a square-shaped footprint.

1882: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 15, shows the same configuration of the block as on the 1875 map. The house at 38 Oak Street is shown; no owner's name or lot size are indicated. Sewer lines have been laid out on Oak Street.

1895: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by Everts & Richards, Plates 48-49, shows the same configuration of the block as on the 1882 map. Street railway lines are shown on Westminster and Cranston Streets. The abutting lot to the west, on the corner of Messer Street, has been subdivided so that 38 Oak Street now stands on the third lot east of Messer. No owner's name or lot size is indicated.

1902: Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 35 shows Lot 168 on the south side of Oak Street, three lots east of Messer Street. The lot size is 7,677 square feet. Neither the building footprint nor the owner's name are shown on this map.

1908: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by L.J. Richards Co., plate 15: The house at 38 Oak Street is owned by S.K. Fiske (note alternate spelling of the last name). The ell at the east side of the house has been added and the building now has an L-shaped footprint.

1918: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 7 shows the house at 90 Oak Street (recall the street was renumbered in 1910), standing on a 7,677 sq. ft. lot owned by J. Taylor. On the building footprint, the rear wall of the addition now projects behind the rear wall of the house, so that the addition looks to be set slightly further back from the street than it was in 1908. (This may or may not be indicative of an actual change to the building; no building permit was found indicating further alteration of the building.) The map also refers to the Rufus and Nathan Waterman Heirs Plat.

1926: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 7 shows the same configuration of 90 Oak Street as on the 1918 map; the owner is identified as E.P. Taylor, and the lot size remains 7,677 square feet. The map refers to the Rufus and Nathan Waterman Heirs Plat (card 699).

1937: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 7 shows the same configuration of 90 Oak Street as on the 1918 and 1926 maps; the owner is still E.P. Taylor, and the lot size remains 7,677 square feet. The map refers to both the Rufus and Nathan Waterman Heirs Plat (card 699) and the Richard Waterman Estate Division (card 97).

Intent to Build Records (Archives)

No permit was found for the original house, but on August 17, 1903 permit #15906 was issued to Samuel K. Fisk to construct an addition at 38 Oak Street.

Directories (Archives)

Providence City Directory, 1857: Samuel Fisk, jeweler, resides 104 Cranston St.

Providence City Directory, 1858: Samuel K. Fisk, jeweler, resides 104 Cranston St., office 30 Page St.

Providence City Directory, 1859: Samuel K. Fisk, jeweler, resides Oak St. near Sycamore.²

² Due to publication schedules, a city directory for a given year often provides information relative to the previous year. Thus, while the 1859 directory is the first to show Samuel Fiske living on Oak Street, the house may in fact have been standing in 1858, or even in late 1857. See also footnote 3, next page.]

Tax Records (Archives)

Tax Ledger A3, Page 291: Plat 35, Lot 168, owned by Martha E. Dyer, was assessed on August 1, 1854. The 7,500 square foot lot was valued at \$750 for land and \$0 for buildings.

Tax Ledger A3, Page 294: Plat 35, Lot 168, owned by Catherine G. Love, was assessed on October 1, 1855. The 7,620 square foot lot was valued at \$762 for land and \$0 for buildings. The ledger notes that the property was transferred to Oliver Waterman on May 19, 1857 (Deed Book 147, page 447).

Tax Ledger A3, Page 302: Plat 35, Lot 168, owned by Oliver Waterman, was assessed on May 19, 1857. The 7,620 square foot lot was valued at \$762 for land and \$0 for buildings. The ledger notes that the property was transferred to Samuel K. Fiske on May 26, 1857 (Deed Book 147, page 453).

Tax Ledger A5, Page 207: Plat 35, Lot 168, owned by Samuel K. Fiske, was assessed on May 26, 1857. The 7,677 square foot lot was valued at \$762 for land and \$1,000 for buildings.³

Assessor's Field Cards (Assessor's Office)

Field Card for AP 35, Lot 168: Oak Street [Note: the next card, listing owners after 1977, is missing; additional deed research to identify the two subsequent owners is below.]

Owned by Samuel K. Fiske of Scituate (RI), as of May 26, 1857

Owned by John Taylor and wife Emma P. Taylor, as of November 2, 1908

Owned by John Taylor and wife Emma P. Taylor, as of June 1, 1914

Owned by Emma P. Taylor, widow, as of December 1, 1919

Owned by Salvatore G. Ambrosino as of December 1936.

Owned by Frank Ambrosino, Grace Crudeli and Spencer R. Carbone as of August 10, 1975.

Owned by Barbara Ware Learned as of May 11, 1976 (ref. Deed Book 1191, Page 729).

Owned by Spencer E. Pullon and Arleen A. Pullon as of November 18, 1977 (ref. DB 1202, Page 354).

Deeds (Registry of Deeds)

Deed Book 147, Page 453: On May 26, 1857, Oliver Waterman of Providence sold to Samuel K. Fiske of Providence, for \$700, one lot on the south side of Oak Street, numbered Lot #52 on the Plat of House Lots of the Heirs of Rufus and Nathan Waterman (1848). The lot size is given as 50 feet by 152 feet. The deed notes that the property was "the same conveyed to me by Horace I. Love and wife on May 19, 1857." Given that the deed mentions no buildings on the property, and that the sale price was so close to the assessed value of \$762, it seems clear that the house was not yet built.

Deed Book 4316, Page 162: On March 17, 2000, Mark D. Wallick, trustee in the bankruptcy proceedings of Arleen A. Pullon, sold 90 Oak Street to Dicon Corp. of Johnston, RI. The deed refers to the grantor receiving the property from the will of Salvatore G. Ambrosino (DB 1191, Page 729).

Deed Book 4482, Page 27: On October 11, 2000, Dicon Corp. sold 90 Oak Street to Amy Liedtke and Karen Holler of Providence.

³Since neither Oliver Waterman's tax assessment of May 19, 1857 nor his deed to Samuel Fiske one week later, on May 26, 1857, mentions any buildings on the property, it seems clear that the house was not yet built when Fiske purchased the lot. Yet Fiske's tax assessment, apparently made the same day as his real estate purchase, included a value of \$1,000 for a building on the lot. It seems highly unlikely that a house could have been constructed within one week. More likely, the house was constructed sometime between the end of May 1857 and the end of 1858, so that the 1859 city directory could list Fiske as living on Oak Street. Perhaps the assessment was backdated for some reason, or perhaps the ledger is in error.